

FFAS

HANDBOOK

Position Classification

For FSA, FAS, and RMA Offices
(Except Foreign Service Employees
and
Non-Federal Employees in County Offices)

SHORT REFERENCE

2-PM
(Revision 5)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Farm Service Agency
Washington, DC 20250

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Farm Service Agency
Washington, DC 20250

Position Classification
2-PM (Revision 5)

Amendment 2

Approved by: Deputy Administrator, Management



Amendment Transmittal

A

Reason for
Amendment

Subparagraph 104 C has been amended to clarify the criteria for an employee to be promoted noncompetitively.

Page Control Chart

TC

Text

Exhibit

6-3, 6-4

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Part 1 Basic Provisions

1 Overview

A

Handbook Purpose

This handbook prescribes the GS and WG Position Classification Program for FSA, FAS, and RMA:

- policies
 - procedures
 - scope
 - applications
 - principles.
-

B

In This Handbook

FFAS position classification policies and procedures for the following are included in this handbook:

- developing position descriptions
 - supervisory responsibility
 - reviewing position descriptions and classifications
 - desk audits
 - appeals
 - suitability and national security designations
 - position management.
-

C

Related Handbooks

FFAS handbooks related to position classification include the following:

- 3-PM for personnel operations
 - 5-PM for performance appraisals
 - 13-PM for human resources management evaluations
 - 23-PM for career enhancement
 - 27-PM for County Office classification
 - 29-PM for reduction in force.
-

Continued on the next page

1 Overview (Continued)

D

Objective

The primary objective of the classification process is to assign to each position the appropriate:

- title
- pay plan
- series
- grade.

2 Authorities and Responsibilities

A

HRD

Responsibilities

HRD has the authority and responsibility for developing and issuing policy and procedural guidelines covering the FFAS Position Classification Program, including:

- position description development
- interpretation of OPM standards
- position sensitivity
- appeal procedures and determinations
- career ladders
- position management.

HRD shall:

- exercise delegated classification authority
- emphasize sound position management
- develop FFAS classification guidance
- ensure consistency in the classification of positions within each FFAS agency
- maintain liaison with OHRM concerning classification standards, problems, appeals, etc.

Continued on the next page

2 Authorities and Responsibilities (Continued)

B PD Responsibilities

Within FFAS policies and procedures, PD:

- has authority and responsibility for the classification program covering:
 - the Kansas City complex
 - State Offices
 - Federal County Office positions
 - APFO
- may supplement this handbook as necessary.

3 Position Classification Basis

A Principles

The FFAS classification system is based on the following 2 fundamental principles:

- pay shall be based on the principle of equal pay for substantially equal work
- differences in pay shall be in proportion to:
 - substantial differences in the difficulty, responsibility, and qualification requirements of the work performed
 - the contributions to efficiency and economy in the service performed.

B Sources of Authority

The Classification Act of 1949, as amended, is the primary legal authority for the classification of GS positions. Related sources include:

- 5 CFR Part 511, for GS
- 5 CFR Part 532, for WG.

4-15 (Reserved)

Part 2 Classification Requirements and Standards

16 Classification Standards

A

Use of Standards

All positions shall be classified according to OPM position classification standards and guides. See subparagraph 34 D. Positions shall not be classified by comparison to other similar positions.

B

New or Revised Standards

New or revised OPM standards and guides become effective when issued. The classifying office shall:

- review all affected positions
 - make necessary changes within the timeframe designated by OPM.
-

C

Requesting Extensions

Extensions of the timeframe allowed for implementing new standards require the approval of the Director, OHRM. Requests for extensions shall:

- be in writing
- include reasons for requested extension
- specify the amount of additional time needed.

PD shall submit requests for extensions through HRD.

D

Supervisory Effect on Positions

Supervisors materially affect the classification of positions by how they:

- organize work for which they are responsible
 - assign specific duties to each position
 - supervise the work being performed.
-

17 Misuse of the Classification Program

A

Reclassification Policy

Reclassification shall not be used as a means of circumventing other personnel programs. Supervisors shall **not**:

- assign higher level work to noncompetitively upgrade employees through accretion of duties

Note: The Merit Promotion Program shall be followed to ensure consideration of all eligible employees.

- use a downgrading action as a disciplinary measure
- use an upgrading action as a reward for outstanding work performance

Note: The Incentive Awards Program shall be used to reward outstanding work performance.

- use an upgrading action to retain an employee who threatens to resign or accept another position if not promoted.
-

18-30 (Reserved)

Part 3 Position Descriptions and Classification

31 Position Description Requirements

**A
Description of
Requirements**

A position description shall:

- be prepared for all positions, both supervisory and nonsupervisory
 - state the current major duties, responsibilities, supervisory relationships, organizational location, and any other aspects of a position that may be necessary to provide for proper classification.
-

**B
Relationship to
Performance
Standards**

The position description provides the basis for developing performance standards. Position descriptions shall include all responsibilities that are represented in their respective performance standards.

32 Position Description Elements

A Narrative Position Descriptions

Write narrative position descriptions for both supervisory and nonsupervisory positions to give complete, specific, and current facts as follows.

| Element | Description |
|----------------------|---|
| Introduction | <p>Basic position assignment.</p> <p>Promotion potential, as appropriate.</p> <p>Notation that position is at the full performance or expert level, as appropriate.</p> |
| Major Duties | <p>Duties that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • occupy a substantial portion of the employee's time • are performed on a regular, recurring basis. <p>Describe duties using action verbs with an object.</p> <p>Include special requirements, such as access to national security documents, necessity for a qualified typist, etc.</p> <p>Note: Do not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe duties in detail that require constant revision, such as precise number of offices served • include detailed, step-by-step procedures. |
| Supervision Received | <p>Level of independence, supervisory restrictions, instructions, and guidance under which an employee operates.</p> <p>Kinds of problems or other matters referred to the supervisor.</p> <p>The purpose and extent of review of work.</p> <p>Significant types of actions or decisions not subject to supervisory controls, but for which the employee is responsible.</p> |

Continued on the next page

32 Position Description Elements (Continued)**B****Supervisory
Position
Descriptions**

Supervisory position descriptions shall describe supervisory duties and responsibilities separately from other duties and responsibilities of the position as follows.

| Element | Description |
|-----------------------|--|
| Introduction | Basic position assignment. Mission or function of the current organization. |
| Major Duties | Duties that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • occupy a substantial portion of the employee's time • are performed on a regular, recurring basis. Description of the work directed, and its scope and effect. Working relationships. Any specific authority placed in the position. |
| Supervision Exercised | The work supervised. The scope and degree of supervisory responsibility, including, as applicable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work planning and organization • work assignment and review • supervisory personnel functions, such as selecting, evaluating, and promoting employees • changing work situations • variety of work • any special situations that may substantially affect the position. EEO responsibilities. |
| Supervision Received | Supervisory restrictions, instructions, and guidance under which the incumbent operates. The kinds of problems or other matters that the incumbent refers to the supervisor. The purpose and extent of review of the incumbent's work. Significant types of actions or decisions that are the incumbent's responsibility or are not subject to supervisory controls. |

Continued on the next page

32 Position Description Elements (Continued)

C**FES Position
Descriptions**

In addition to the requirements for the Introduction and Major Duties described in subparagraph A, include the following information in nonsupervisory FES position descriptions.

| Factor | Title | Description |
|---------------|------------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Knowledge Required by the Position | Kind or nature of knowledge and skills needed. How the knowledge and skills are used in doing the work. |
| 2 | Supervisory Controls | How the work is assigned and reviewed. The employee's responsibility for and level of independence in performing the work. |
| 3 | Guidelines | The nature of guidelines for performing the work. Judgment needed to apply the guidelines or develop new guides. |
| 4 | Complexity | Nature of the assignment. Difficulty in identifying what needs to be done. Difficulty and originality involved in performing the work. |
| 5 | Scope and Effect | Purpose of the work. Impact of the work product or service. |
| 6 | Personal Contacts | Personal contacts other than the supervisor. Conditions under which contacts are made. |
| 7 | Purpose of Contacts | Reasons for personal contacts listed in factor 6. Skill needed to accomplish work through person-to-person activities. |
| 8 | Physical Demands | The nature, frequency, and intensity of physical activity. |
| 9 | Work Environment | Risks and discomforts imposed by physical surroundings. Safety precautions needed to avoid accidents or discomfort. |

33 Supervisory Action

A Initiating Classification Action

The following table lists the steps required by supervisors to have positions classified.

Requirement: A position must always be classified before it can be advertised or filled.

| Step | Action |
|------|--|
| 1 | <p>Prepare a position description according to paragraph 32.</p> <p>Note: Contact the servicing classifier to determine whether the position description should be in FES or narrative format.</p> |
| 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare SF-52 according to 3-PM. • Obtain the appropriate approvals. |
| 3 | <p>Prepare, as necessary, a memorandum requesting and justifying a special security clearance. See paragraph 53.</p> |
| 4 | <p>Send each of the documents in steps 1 through 3 to the servicing personnel office no less than 3 weeks before the desired effective date.</p> <p>Note: If a position is new or otherwise unusual, submit the documents to the servicing personnel office well in advance of the usual timeframe.</p> |
| 5 | <p>After the classifier's concurrence with the proposed position description, sign and date AD-332, blocks 19 and 20 to certify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accuracy of the major duties and responsibilities of positions • necessity of the position to carry out Government functions for which the supervisor is responsible. <p>Note: Field organizations must submit the signed AD-332 at step 4.</p> |

Continued on the next page

33 Supervisory Action (Continued)

**B
Maintaining
Position
Descriptions**

The following table lists the steps required by supervisors to maintain position descriptions.

| Step | Action |
|-------------|---|
| 1 | Review position descriptions of subordinates at least annually. |
| 2 | Update position descriptions to reflect changes, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • program assignments • supervisory relationships • organization structures. |
| 3 | For positions serviced by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HRD, initiate SF-52, as necessary, to redescribe duties • PD, submit a: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • signed AD-332 • memorandum requesting the revision. |

34 Classifying Positions

A

Basis for Series and Grade Determinations

A series determination is based on the:

- duties and responsibilities of the position
- qualifications required by these duties.

A grade determination is based on the:

- level of difficulty and responsibility of the work
 - qualification requirements of the work.
-

B

Factors Not Considered

Do **not** consider the following factors in determining the grade level of positions:

- volume of work
- financial need of the employee
- salary comparability
- quality of work
- efficiency of performance
- employee's length of service
- difficulty in recruiting for the occupation
- duties performed only in the absence of another employee.

While consistency in classification must be considered, positions shall not be classified by comparison to other positions either within or outside FFAS.

Continued on the next page

34 Classifying Positions (Continued)

**C
Classifiers'
Responsibilities**

Classifiers shall:

- review the proposed position description thoroughly and gather any additional relevant information
- assess any impact the proposed position may have on other positions
- discuss questions or concerns with the supervisor
- consider the interests of position management in reviewing the proposed position
- advise management concerning position management problems
- use the appropriate classification standards, and sound classification principles and judgment, in determining the series and grade
- use official titles where they are prescribed
- prepare an evaluation statement, as appropriate, according to paragraph 37
- ensure consistency in the classification of positions within the Agency.

Continued on the next page

34 Classifying Positions (Continued)

D**Selecting a Standard**

The series and grade of each position shall be classified according to standards issued by OPM. Use the directly applicable standard for series for which a standard has been issued.

Note: Other standards may be used to verify the application of criteria provided in series-specific standards.

Use the closest applicable standards as a comparison to determine the grade of a position for which there is either of the following:

- no published standard
- the duties and responsibilities either do not meet or exceed the grade level criteria in the series' standard.

Select standards that cover work as similar as possible to the work being evaluated. Consider the following in selecting the closest applicable standard:

- the kind of work processes, functions, or subject matter of the work performed
 - the qualifications required to do the work
 - the level of difficulty and responsibility
 - the combination of classification factors that have the greatest influence on the grade level.
-

35 Reviewing Positions

A Reviewing Position Descriptions

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of position descriptions. See subparagraph 33 B. Servicing classifiers shall, as necessary, periodically review positions within their delegated authority.

Position descriptions shall be revised if:

- the position description is found to be inaccurate, inadequate, or incomplete
- an organizational unit has been impacted by the addition or deletion of substantive programs, functions, or activities
- a reorganization has taken place that impacts the duties or supervisory relationships described in the position description.

Annotate minor revisions, such as indicating a change in the name of the organizational unit. Significant revisions require a new position description. See subparagraph 33 B.

B Human Resources Management Reviews

Reviews may also be conducted as part of a regularly scheduled human resources management evaluation. See 13-PM.

36 Corrective Actions

A Timeframe

If a desk audit or other review results in a change to a position, corrective action shall be made within 4 pay periods after notifying the manager or supervisor of the reviewed organizational unit.

Note: This time period may be extended in unusually complicated or difficult cases.

37 Evaluation Statements

A

Preparing Evaluation Statements

Servicing classifiers shall prepare evaluation statements according to this paragraph.

B

Evaluation Statement Requirements

An evaluation statement is required for:

- all supervisory positions
 - nonsupervisory positions in any occupation for which:
 - there are no published OPM classification standards or guides
 - a published OPM classification standard or guide exists, but the duties and responsibilities of the position are classified above or below the grade level criteria in the classification standard or guide
 - • more than 1 classification series, standard, or both, applies
 - the classification standard used is in the FES format.
-

C

Narrative Nonsupervisory Positions

Evaluation statements for nonsupervisory narrative positions shall:

- reflect the basis for selecting the title and series of the position
 - contain a detailed analysis of the duties and responsibilities of the position in comparison with appropriate OPM classification standards or guides
 - show, by specific example, how the:
 - grade is met
 - lower level is exceeded
 - higher level is not met
 - be signed and dated by the classifier who classifies the position.
-

Continued on the next page

37 Evaluation Statements (Continued)

D
FES
Nonsupervisory
Positions

FES evaluations shall include the following on AD-332:

- benchmarks, factor level descriptions, or primary standard factor levels used in point rating
 - point values assigned to each factor
 - total point values
 - final grade.
-

E
Supervisory
Positions

Complete FSA-392 for supervisory positions.

38 Desk Audits

A

What Is a Desk Audit

A desk audit is an interview held by a classification or personnel specialist with an employee to:

- discuss the employee's major duties and responsibilities
 - determine the proper classification of a position.
-

B

Purpose of Desk Audits

Desk audits shall be used as a tool to gain information about a position. This paragraph contains detailed information that may be used to:

- verify details of assignments
 - resolve questions
 - aid in determining the series and grade of a position.
-

C

Applicability of Desk Audits

Desk audits may be appropriate if:

- the duties of a position have significantly and naturally evolved since the position was last classified
 - a document or other review indicates the possibility that a position is misclassified.
-

D

Requesting a Desk Audit

Desk audits may either be initiated by the servicing personnel office or requested, in writing, by:

- a supervisor
- an employee, with the concurrence of the supervisor.

Note: If an employee does not have the supervisor's concurrence, the employee may do either of the following:

- grieve the accuracy of the position description
- appeal the classification of the position according to Part 5.

Neither any representative selected by an employee nor an employee organization shall have the right to be present during any desk audit.

Note: A representative may be present if all parties agree.

Continued on the next page

38 Desk Audits (Continued)

E

Preparing for a Desk Audit

To prepare for the audit, the employee should:

- review his or her position description
 - determine its accuracy
 - make note of any changes or new assignments not reflected in the current position description
 - • discuss assignments with the supervisor and attempt to adequately and accurately describe, in writing, the duties of the position
 - prepare responses to audit questions in subparagraph H
 - collect work samples to show the classifier.
-

F

Conducting the Desk Audit

A classifier from HRD or PD will conduct the audit.

The servicing classifier may determine that a supervisory audit will be performed instead of a desk audit, particularly if there is potential for an upgrade that would require a competitive action.

The audit may be conducted at the employee's worksite or in the classifier's office, as agreed between the employee and the classifier. For cost and time savings, some audits may be conducted over the telephone. Audits usually last 1 to 1 1/2 hours.

G

What Happens in the Desk Audit

During the audit, the employee will be asked to:

- describe the work he or she does in detail
- provide samples of work products.

The classifier will also discuss the employee's position with the supervisor after the desk audit.

Note: Audits do not deal with an employee's job performance.

Continued on the next page

38 Desk Audits (Continued)

H

Basic Desk Audit Questions

The following questions are designed to capture information about an employee's job that is related to criteria used for grade, and sometimes series, determination.

- What are the major functions you perform in your job?
- How do you get your assignments?
- Who reviews your work products?
- How is your work reviewed?
- What types of decisions, judgments, or recommendations do you have to make in performing your assigned duties?
- What deadlines must you meet?
- What kinds of problems do you discuss with your supervisor before making a decision or recommendation?
- Are you responsible for the final approval of any work products?
- What guidelines do you use in performing your job?
- Do you perform any work that is not covered by written guidelines?
- What types of decisions do you make without consulting your supervisor?
- With whom do you have personal contacts?
- Do you supervise or oversee the work of any other employee?

Note: This list is not all-inclusive.

Continued on the next page

38 Desk Audits (Continued)

I

Desk Audit Results

The classifier compares the work described by the employee and the supervisor to the appropriate classification standard to ensure that the:

- employee's position is accurately classified
- employee is properly compensated for the work he or she is assigned.

Upon completion of this process, the employee and supervisor are notified of the audit results and any corrective action that may be necessary.

If the findings of a desk audit indicate that the duties performed are classified at a higher grade than that at which the position is currently classified, the following action occurs.

| IF all the criteria in subparagraph 104 C are... | AND... | THEN the... |
|--|---|--|
| met | the supervisor decides the higher graded duties should remain in the position | position may be upgraded noncompetitively. |
| not met | | higher graded duties shall be reassigned to employees already at that grade. |

If position management principles permit, a higher graded position may be advertised through the appropriate merit promotion process.

39-51 (Reserved)

Part 4 Sensitive Positions

52 Position Designations

A

**Security
Authorities**

Position sensitivity shall be determined according to 5 CFR Parts 731 and 732.

B

**Responsibility
for Position
Designations**

Classifiers shall designate position suitability risk levels and national security clearance requirements according to OPM regulations. Designations will be documented on FSA-391.

53 Suitability Clearances

A

Suitability Clearance Criteria

Every position must be designated at a position risk level commensurate with the public trust responsibilities and characteristics of the position as they relate to the efficiency of the service.

Following are the 3 suitability position risk levels.

| Designation | Adverse Impact on the Efficiency of the Service |
|--------------------|--|
| Low Risk | Duties have a limited relation to the Agency mission. Program responsibilities affect the efficiency of the service. |
| Moderate Risk | Potential for moderate to serious impact involving duties of considerable importance to the Agency or program mission with significant program responsibilities and delivery of customer services. |
| High Risk | Potential for exceptionally serious impact involving duties especially critical to the Agency or program mission with broad scope of policy or program authority. |

B

HRD Action

HRD shall:

- determine suitability risk levels according to the Federal Risk Designation System for all positions serviced by HRD
 - provide the required forms for employees in positions designated by HRD as Moderate or High Risk
 - ensure that public trust clearance forms are completed timely
 - review suitability clearance requests from PD
 - forward the requests and completed forms to OHRM for their review and approval.
-

Continued on the next page

53 Suitability Clearances (Continued)

C**PD Action**

PD shall:

- determine suitability risk levels according to the Federal Risk Designation System for all positions serviced by PD
 - provide the required forms for employees in positions designated by PD as Moderate or High Risk
 - ensure that forms are completed timely
 - forward the following to HRD for processing:
 - request for designation
 - position designation record
 - completed forms.
-

D**Division
Requests**

Division Directors may contact their assigned classifiers to obtain the risk designations for the positions within their divisions. If a Division Director does not agree with the classification specialist's determination:

- the Division Director shall prepare written justification to support the different risk level
 - HRD shall review the justification and determine whether the different risk level is appropriate.
-

54 National Security Clearances

A**Security
Clearance
Requests**

A security clearance is required if the officially assigned work of a position:

- requires access to national security information designated as any of the following:
 - confidential
 - secret
 - top secret
 - involves the protection of the nation, such as developing defense plans.
-

B**Required
Justification**

Requests for national security clearances shall:

- be submitted by supervisors, in writing, to HRD or PD, as appropriate
- accompany SF-52 to establish or fill any position for which a clearance is required
- include a justification for the request on FSA-143

Example: See subparagraph C for an example of a completed FSA-143.

- be submitted **only** for those positions whose duties require access to designated national security information
- be approved by the servicing classification specialist in HRD before processing.

Notes: This subparagraph does **not** apply to FAS.

PD shall send requests with position descriptions, position designations, and FSA-143's to HRD for approval.

Continued on the next page

54 National Security Clearances (Continued)

C
Example of
FSA-143

Following is an example of a completed FSA-143.

REPRODUCE LOCALLY. Include form number and date on all reproductions.

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| FSA-143 (08-13-97) | | U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE Farm Service Agency | | 1. DATE OF REQUEST January 10, 199X |
| NATIONAL SECURITY CLEARANCE JUSTIFICATION | | | | 2. DIVISION INITIATING REQUEST Information Division |
| 3. EMPLOYEE'S NAME, TITLE, SERIES AND GRADE Joe Brown Communications Specialist GS-39222-11 | | 4. SUPERVISOR'S NAME AND TELEPHONE NO. James E. Smith 999-9999 | | 5. TYPE OF CLEARANCE REQUESTED (Mark only one) Confidential <input type="checkbox"/> Secret <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Top Secret <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. DESCRIBE THE DUTIES WHICH REQUIRE ACCESS TO THE LEVEL OF CLASSIFIED NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION INDICATED IN ITEM 5. The employee monitors information, classified by the International Security Agency as secret, transmitted from headquarters to field agents. | | | | |
| FOR VACANCIES ATTACH TO SF-52; ALL OTHER CHANGES SUBMIT TO FSA/HRD | | | | |
| 7. SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE <i>/s/ James E. Smith</i> | | | | DATE January 10, 199X |
| 8. HEADQUARTERS DIVISION/FIELD OFFICE/STATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE <i>/s/ Alice T. Jones</i> | | | | DATE January 10, 199X |
| 9. DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR'S SIGNATURE <i>/s/ Samuel Taylor</i> | | | | DATE January 25, 199X |
| FOR HRD USE ONLY | | | | |
| 10. APPROVED <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISAPPROVED <input type="checkbox"/> | | 11. COMMENTS | | |
| 12. HRD CLASSIFIER'S SIGNATURE <i>/s/ Thomas T. Royal</i> | | | | DATE January 26, 199X |

Continued on the next page

54 National Security Clearances (Continued)

D**HRD Action**

HRD shall take the following action on all requests for security clearances:

- review requests according to OPM regulations
- ensure that duties and responsibilities necessitating access to national security information are documented in the position descriptions
- as necessary, meet with the requesting officials to resolve questions or request additional justification
- notify the requesting officials whether the requests are approved
- forward the approved requests to the Services Group, HRD.

The Services Group, HRD shall:

- provide the employees with the required forms for completion
 - ensure that forms are completed within 10 workdays
 - forward the requests for the security clearances and the completed forms to OHRM for review and approval.
-

E**Limitation on Access**

Security clearance investigations take 6 months or more to complete. An employee's security clearance will be considered confirmed**only** when final OHRM notification of approval is received by HRD. Until HRD receives the notification, the employee must **not** perform duties that require access to national security information.

Continued on the next page

54 National Security Clearances (Continued)

F

**Reviewing
Positions**

Supervisors shall periodically review positions requiring national security clearances to ensure that these positions still need clearance.

| IF... | THEN the... |
|---|--|
| special clearance is no longer required | supervisor shall notify HRD in writing. Note: Supervisors of offices serviced by PD shall notify HRD through PD. |
| HRD or PD questions the need for continuing the special clearance | appropriate classifier shall request the division to provide further justification for continuing the clearance. |

55-76 (Reserved)

Part 5 Appeals Procedures**77 Overview**

A**Introduction**

This part:

- includes information about the FFAS classification appeals procedures for Federal positions
 - applies to GS positions, except as otherwise noted for WG positions.
-

B**Timeframe for Filing Appeals**

Employees or supervisors may file an appeal concerning a classification decision at any time. See paragraph 83 for deadlines for protection of retroactive benefits.

78 What May Be Appealed

A**Appealable Classification Decisions**

An employee may appeal:

- the series or grade of the position to which the employee is currently and officially assigned
 - whether the position is included or excluded from GS.
-

B**Appealing the Title**

The title of a position may be appealed if it:

- is an authorized title specified in the appropriate OPM position classification standard or flysheet
 - reflects a qualification requirement or an authorized area of specialization.
-

79 What May Not Be Appealed

A

Grievable Issues

The following issues cannot be appealed, but may be addressed under administrative or negotiated grievance procedures according to 5 CFR 511.607:

- inclusion or exclusion of a major duty in the official position description, or the accuracy of the official position description
 - an assignment or detail out of the scope of the normally performed duties as contained in the official position description
 - the accuracy, consistency, or use of Agency supplemental classification guides
 - the title of a position unless it meets the criteria specified in subparagraph 78 B
 - inclusion of the position under the GM pay schedule.
-

B

Nonreviewable Issues

The following issues are not appealable nor reviewable according to 5 CFR 511.607:

- the series, grade, or pay system of a position to which the employee is detailed or temporarily promoted, unless the appellant is serving under a term promotion
 - a proposed classification
 - the classification of a position to which the employee is not assigned by an official personnel action
 - the classification of the employee's position based on comparisons with other positions, and not published OPM standards and guides
 - the adequacy or accuracy of the classification criteria contained in an OPM classification standard or guide
 - the classification of a position that has been certified by OPM as the result of an appeal when there has been no change in the governing classification standards or guides or the major duties of the position.
-

80 Resolving Position Classification Questions

A

Policy to Resolve Questions

Employees, supervisors, and the servicing personnel office shall try to resolve classification questions before they develop into position classification appeals.

B

Accuracy of the Position Description

Before an appeal is filed, the supervisor and employee shall try to agree on the description of duties assigned to the position. If, during an appeal, the accuracy of the position description cannot be resolved between the employee and the supervisor, the appeal will be decided on the basis of the actual duties and responsibilities assigned by management and performed by the employee.

Note: The employee will retain the right to grieve the accuracy of the position description under subparagraph 79 A.

81 Notice of Appeal Rights Regarding Classification Actions

A

Notification of Classification Decision

If a classification action could result in a lower grade or rate of basic pay for an encumbered position, the servicing personnel office shall promptly notify the supervisor. The supervisor shall consider realigning work to support the existing grade. If the work cannot be realigned, the servicing personnel office shall promptly notify the employee in writing.

B

Contents of Notice

The notice shall:

- advise the employee of grade and pay protection, and time limits
 - advise the employee of appeal rights and filing procedures
 - specify time limits for filing an appeal if the employee is to establish or preserve the right to any retroactive adjustment that may be warranted. See paragraph 82.
-

82 Provisions for Protecting Retroactive Benefits

A

Entitlement to Benefits

An appeal decision that reverses a classification action that resulted in a downgrading or loss of compensation may entitle an employee to retroactive benefits if the classification appeal is filed with PD, HRD, OHRM, or OPM within 15 calendar days after the effective date of the FFAS personnel action.

B

Subsequent Appeals

Subsequent appeals of lower level appellate decisions must be filed within 15 calendar days after that lower level decision.

C

Extending Deadlines

Time limits may be extended if the employee can show either of the following:

- there was no notification of time limits
 - there were extenuating circumstances.
-

83 Options for Filing an Appeal

A

List of Options for Filing Appeals

An appeal of a WG employee may be filed with the Director, HRD or Director, OHRM at any time. See subparagraph 86 A for the timeframe for filing an appeal with OPM.

Exception: If the employee requests reconsideration of a classification action that results in a reduction in grade or pay level, for the employee to be entitled to retroactive corrective action, the appeal must be filed within 15 calendar days of the effective date of the downgrading or other classification action.

The following table lists the options for filing a GS classification appeal.

Note: Employees serviced by PD may first file an appeal with the Chief, PD. Decisions rendered by PD may then be appealed according to the following table.

| IF an appeal is filed with the... | THEN the appeal... | AND the decision... |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| Director, HRD | may receive the maximum number of reviews | serves as the final FFAS determination. |
| Director, OHRM | may also be filed with the appropriate OPM regional office | serves as the final USDA determination. |
| appropriate OPM regional office | may only be reviewed at this level | is final and there is no further right of appeal. |

B

KCMO Appeals

KCMO, PD has delegated authority to develop its own appellate procedural system for employee classification appeals. These procedures shall:

- be in writing
- be available to all employees
- cover all positions within GS for which classification authority has been delegated
- not infringe upon or interfere with the right of employees to appeal directly to HRD, OHRM, or OPM.

84 Appeal Process

A

Steps in Appeal Process

The following table lists the steps in the process of an appeal to HRD.

| Step | Action |
|------|--|
| 1 | The employee submits written appeal to the Director, HRD. |
| 2 | <p>Director, HRD shall notify the appellant of the receipt of the application.</p> <p>Neither a representative selected by the employee nor an employee organization shall have the right to be present during any desk audit that may be conducted.</p> <p>Note: A representative may be present if all parties agree.</p> |
| 3 | <p>The employee shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be granted a reasonable time to develop and present material supporting the appeal • be free from restraint, interference, coercion, or reprisal in presenting the appeal • promptly provide requested facts. <p>Note: HRD may cancel the appeal if the employee fails to provide required information or otherwise fails to proceed with the advancement of the application in a timely manner.</p> |
| 4 | Director, HRD shall process the appeal and render a decision promptly. |

B

Contents of Appeals

An appeal by an employee shall be in writing and shall contain the reasons why the employee believes his or her position is erroneously classified, or should be brought under or excluded from the GS system.

C

Agreement of Duties

The employee and the supervisor should agree on the description of the duties and responsibilities performed.

If they disagree, the supervisor shall provide a statement indicating the:

- points upon which they disagree
- nature of the disagreements.

In the absence of agreement between the employee and the supervisor, the appeal will be decided on the basis of the actual duties and responsibilities assigned by management and performed by the employee.

Continued on the next page

84 Appeal Process (Continued)

D

HRD Action

HRD shall determine and take the appropriate action necessary to review the appeal.

E

HRD Decision

The decision shall:

- be based on the record
- be provided in writing to the appellant, supervisor, and servicing personnel office as necessary
- inform the employee of the effective date and reasons for the decision, including a comparison of the position with the appropriate standards
- advise the employee of the right to appeal the decision to a higher level.

Note: That appeal must be filed within 15 calendar days after the receipt of the Agency decision.

F

Effect of Filing an Appeal

The filing of an employee appeal with PD, HRD, OHRM, or OPM shall not stop a classification action proposed or taken.

85 Appealing OPM Certificates

A

FFAS Appeals

HRD may appeal OPM certificates issued under 5 U.S.C. 5103 or 5 U.S.C. 5110.

- Forward appeals to the Director, OHRM as soon after receipt as possible.
- OHRM must submit the appeals to OPM within 45 calendar days of the certificate date.

86 Wage Grade Appeals

A

Appealing to OPM

WG employees may file an appeal to the appropriate OPM regional office only after a decision has been issued by the Director, OHRM.

Appeals must be filed within 15 calendar days after receipt of the decision. OPM may extend this time limit if the employee shows that:

- he or she was not notified of the applicable time limit and was not otherwise aware of it
- circumstances beyond the employee's control prevented him or her from filing the appeal within the prescribed time limit.

Appeals shall:

- be submitted in writing
- identify specifically the portions of the decision or classification analysis with which the employee disagrees.

OPM decisions are considered final.

87-101 (Reserved)

Part 6 Position Management**102 Position Management Objectives**

A**Definition of
Position
Management**

Position management is the continuous and systematic process of ensuring that organization positions and functions are efficiently and economically structured.

B**Scope**

Position management determines:

- the type of organizational structure that is required to accomplish the functional assignments of each organizational unit
 - how jobs should be designed within that structure
 - how many positions are needed.
-

Continued on the next page

102 Position Management Objectives (Continued)

C**Objectives**

The objectives of position management are to:

- establish the fewest number of positions needed to effectively accomplish assigned functions
 - assign work to employees that is commensurate with their established grade level
 - clearly structure positions to avoid overlapping duties or responsibilities
 - abolish vacant positions if the duties can be redistributed or eliminated
 - optimize employee-to-supervisor ratios
 - limit the number of deputy and assistant positions, both line and staff
 - minimize the number of organizational levels, with emphasis on delegation and decentralization to the lowest possible working level
 - establish positions at the "entry" or "technician" level where possible to ensure:
 - a balance between employees who perform full performance level duties of the organizational unit and developing employees who perform the more routine, lower level duties
 - opportunities for career development.
-

103 Position Management Responsibilities

A

Policy

FFAS is responsible for planning and implementing a position management system to ensure that positions and functions are efficiently and economically structured within each organizational unit.

B

DAM Responsibility

DAM:

- serves as the FFAS position management coordinator
 - is responsible for the following functions of the FFAS position management system:
 - development
 - implementation
 - oversight.
-

C

Management Support Responsibility

Management support personnel, including personnel specialists, budget analysts, and management analysts, shall provide advice and guidance to the coordinator, managers, and supervisors on the development and implementation of the position management system.

D

Managers' Responsibility

Managers and supervisors shall:

- plan and implement effective position management policies in their organizational units
 - ensure that duties assigned to employees within their organizational units are commensurate with the established grade levels
 - annually:
 - evaluate the use of employees
 - identify areas for improvement
 - submit proposals for changes in ceiling to DAM, through the appropriate levels of concurrence.
-

104 Accretion of Duties

A**Exception to
Competitive
Procedures**

Supervisors shall ensure that assigned duties are commensurate with employees' established grade levels. Occasionally, an assigned area of responsibility may be impacted by unforeseen circumstances that inherently increase the scope and complexity of the assignment, such as a significant legislative or regulatory change. In some of those instances, the change may impact the classification of the position.

B**Applicability**

Noncompetitive promotions shall:

- be considered on a case-by-case basis
 - generally require a desk audit to evaluate the additional duties and responsibilities.
-

C**Criteria**

All of the following criteria shall be met for an employee to be considered for noncompetitive promotion:

- ~~the higher level duties could not have been anticipated when the duties were~~ originally assigned~~--~~*
- the employee continues to perform the same basic functions previously assigned
- the major duties of the former position are absorbed into the new position
- the new position has no further promotion potential
- the classification of other positions within the employee's division is not adversely affected
- the action does not result in another employee in the division at the same series ~~the--~~* and grade, performing the same type of work, being denied the~~--~~* opportunity to compete for the higher graded position
- the new position is not a reclassification from nonsupervisory to supervisory status.

Note: Individual cases may have other factors that affect the consideration for noncompetitive promotion.

105 Career Ladders**A****Purpose**

Career ladders are used to develop candidates for full performance level positions. Employees:

- are competitively brought into the lower grade levels of career ladder positions
- advance noncompetitively through training and experience to the full performance level.

B**Using Career Ladder Patterns**

A career ladder pattern establishes the typical noncompetitive progression of positions in a particular series. While most positions in a series will follow the established career ladder pattern, the full performance level of some positions in that series may be lower or higher than that reflected in the career ladder pattern.

C**Promotion Potential**

The full performance level:

- reflects the promotion potential of individual positions
- is the level at which the employee has independent responsibility for the full cycle of work assigned to the position.

Note: In most cases, this will be the highest grade of the career ladder pattern for the series in which the position is classified.

See paragraph 32 for inclusion in the position description.

D**Condition**

Advancement within career ladders is not automatic or mandatory. There is no guarantee that an employee in a career ladder will be promoted. A commitment to promote at a set time must not be made. Supervisors shall regularly discuss with employees:

- performance standards
- accomplishments
- areas for improvement.

Continued on the next page

105 Career Ladders (Continued)

E**Exceeding the
Career Ladder
Pattern**

The grade of certain positions may exceed the highest level provided by the established career ladder pattern. The term expert refers to incumbents of positions which exceed the career ladder pattern. In meeting the grade level criteria established in the classification standards, those positions generally require:

- independent responsibility for a major program area of significant impact to the Agency
- special program expertise.

See paragraph 32 for inclusion in the position description.

F**Lists of Career
Ladder Patterns**

Exhibits 4 through 6 contain lists of career ladder patterns for FSA, FSA, and RMA.

- Only major occupational series are listed. Consult the servicing personnel office if an employee's series is not listed.
 - Because of variations in work requirements, some positions may have full performance levels that are different than those listed. See subparagraph C.
-

Reports, Forms, Abbreviations, and Redelegations of Authority

Reports None

Forms This table lists all forms referenced in this handbook.

| Number | Title | Display Reference | Reference |
|---------|--|-------------------|-----------|
| AD-332 | Position Description Cover Sheet | | 33, 37 |
| FSA-143 | National Security Clearance Justification | | 54 |
| FSA-391 | Position Designation Record | | 52 |
| FSA-392 | Position Evaluation Summary for the General Schedule Supervisory Guide | | 37 |
| SF-52 | Request for Personnel Action | | 33, 54 |

Continued on the next page

Reports, Forms, Abbreviations, and Redelegations of Authority (Continued)

Abbreviations The following abbreviations are not listed in 1-CM.
Not Listed in
1-CM

| Approved Abbreviation | Term | Reference |
|----------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| CFO | Compliance Field Office | Ex. 5 |
| FES | Factor Evaluation System | 32, 33, 37 |
| GS | General Schedule | 1, 3, 77-79, 82, 84, 105 |
| OHRM | Office of Human Resources Management, USDA | 2, 16, 53, 54, Part 5 |
| PD | Personnel Division, KCMO | 2, 16, 33, 53, 54, 82-84 |
| WG | Wage Grade | 1, 3, 77, 83, 86, 105 |

**Redelegations of
Authority** None

Definitions of Terms Used in This Handbook

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Classification of Positions | <u>Classification of positions</u> is the method used to determine the title, series, and grade of a position. |
| Desk Audit | <p>A <u>desk audit</u> is an interview held by a classification or personnel specialist with an employee to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss the employee's major duties and responsibilities • determine the proper classification of a position. |
| Major Duties | <u>Major duties</u> are those which represent the primary reason for the position's existence and which govern the qualification requirements. Typically, they occupy most of the employee's time. |
| Personnel Office | The <u>personnel office</u> is the organizational unit designated to perform a variety of personnel functions, such as classification, staffing, and employee services, for specific organizational segments. |
| Position Description | A <u>position description</u> is a written statement of a position's major duties and responsibilities. |
| Position Management | <u>Position management</u> is the continuous and systematic process of ensuring that organization positions and functions are efficiently and economically structured. |
| Regular and Recurring Duties | <u>Regular and recurring duties</u> are the foundation of most positions. They may be performed in a continuous, uninterrupted manner, or they may be performed at recurring intervals. Within reason, the time intervals between the performance of recurring duties is not as important as the fact that the duties recur with a somewhat anticipated frequency. One-time only or temporary duties generally do not affect the series or grade level of a position. |
| Sensitive Position | A <u>sensitive position</u> is a designated position, the occupant of which could bring about, because of the nature of the position, a material adverse effect on national security. |

Career Ladder Patterns for FSA

| Title | Series | National Office | KCCO, KCMO, State Offices | APFO |
|------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| Accountant | GS-510 | 5/7/9/11/12 | 5/7/9/11/12 | |
| Accounting Technician | GS-525 | 4/5/6/7 | 4/5/6/7 | |
| Accounts Data Technician | GS-503 | | 3/4/5 | |
| Administrative Clerk | GS-303 | | 4/5 | |
| Administrative Officer | GS-341 | | 7/9/11/12 | |
| Administrative Technician | GS-303 | | 4/5/6/7 | |
| Agricultural Credit Technician | GS-1101 | | 5/6/7 | |
| Agricultural Economist | GS-110 | 5/7/9/11/12/13 | | |
| Agricultural Management Specialist | GS-475 | 5/7/9/11/12 | 5/7/9/11 | |
| Agricultural Marketing Specialist | GS-1146 | 5/7/9/11/12 | 5/7/9/11/12 | |
| Agricultural Program Clerk | GS-1101 | | 4/5 | |
| Agricultural Program Specialist | GS-1145 | 5/7/9/11/12 | 5/7/9/11 | |
| Appraiser | GS-1171 | | 7/9/11 | |
| Budget Analyst | GS-560 | 5/7/9/11/12 | 5/7/9/11/12 | |
| Budget Assistant | GS-561 | 4/5/6 | | |
| Cartographic Technician | GS-1371 | | | 5/6/7 |
| Claims Clerk | GS-998 | | 3/4/5 | |
| Claims Examiner | GS-990 | | 5/7/9/11 | |
| Claims Specialist | GS-990 | 5/7/9/11/12 | | |
| Computer Assistant | GS-335 | | 4/5/6 | |
| Computer Clerk | GS-335 | | 3/4/5 | |
| Computer Specialist | GS-334 | 5/7/9/11/12 | 5/7/9/11/12 | 5/7/9/11 |
| Contract Specialist | GS-1102 | 5/7/9/11/12 | 5/7/9/11/12 | 5/7/9/11/12 |

Continued on the next page

Career Ladder Patterns for FSA (Continued)

| Title | Series | National Office | | KCCO, KCMO, State Offices | APFO |
|------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------|-------|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| Editorial Assistant | GS-1087 | 4/5/6/7 | | | |
| Editor, Printed Media | GS-1082 | 5/7/9 | | | |
| EEO Specialist | GS-260 | 5/7/9/11/12 | | 5/7/9/11 | |
| Employee Development Specialist | GS-235 | 5/7/9/11/12 | | 5/7/9/11/12 | |
| Employee Relations Specialist | GS-230 | 5/7/9/11/12 | | 5/7/9/11/12 | |
| Freight Rate Specialist | GS-2131 | | | 5/6/7/8/9 | |
| International Services Assistant | GS-303 | 5/6/7 | | | |
| Legal Instruments Examiner | GS-963 | | | 5/6/7/8 | |
| Loan Specialist | GS-1165 | | | 5/7/9/11 | |
| Management Analyst | GS-343 | 5/7/9/11/12 | | 5/7/9/11/12 | |
| Management Assistant | GS-344 | 4/5/6 | | 5/6/7 | |
| Motor Vehicle Operator | WG-5703 | 3/4/5 | | 5/6 | |
| Office Automation | GS-326 | 2/3/4/5 | | 2/3/4 | 2/3/4 |
| Personnel Clerk | GS-203 | 3/4/5 | | 3/4/5 | |
| Personnel Staffing Specialist | GS-212 | 5/7/9/11/12 | | 5/7/9/11/12 | |
| Photographer | GS-1060 | | | | 5/6/7/8/9 |
| Position Classification Specialist | GS-221 | 5/7/9/11/12 | | 5/7/9/11/12 | |
| Program Analyst | GS-343 | | | 5/7/9/11/12 | |
| Public Affairs Specialist | GS-1035 | 5/7/9/11/12 | | | |
| Purchasing Agent | GS-1105 | 5/6/7 | | 5/6/7 | |
| Secretary | GS-318 | Section | 4/5 | 4 | 4 |
| | | Branch | 4/5/6 | 4/5 | 4/5 |
| | | Div. | 5/6/7 | 4/5/6 | 4/5/6 |

Continued on the next page

Career Ladder Patterns for FSA (Continued)

| Title | Series | National Office | KCCO, KCMO, State Offices | APFO |
|--|---------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| Supply Clerk or Technician | GS-2005 | 3/4/5/6 | 2/3/4/5 | |
| Systems Accountant | GS-510 | 5/7/9/11/12 | 5/7/9/11/12 | |
| Telecommunications Equipment Operator | GS-390 | 5/6/7 | | |
| Traffic Management Specialist | GS-2130 | 5/7/9/11 | 5/7/9/11 | |
| Transportation Clerk | GS-2102 | | 3/4/5 | |
| Travel and Transportation Specialist | GS-2101 | 5/7/9 | | |
| Voucher Examiner | GS-540 | | 3/4/5 | |
| Warehouse Examiner | GS-1850 | | 5/7/9/11 | |

Career Ladder Patterns for RMA

| Title | Series | National Office | R&D Kansas City Office | Field Offices |
|---|---------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Accountant | GS-510 | | 7/9/11/12 | |
| Accounting Technician | GS-525 | | 5/6/7/8 | |
| Agricultural Economist | GS-110 | | 5/7/9/11/12 | |
| Budget Analyst | GS-560 | | 5/7/9/11/12 | |
| Compliance Investigator | GS-1801 | 5/7/9/11/12 | | 5/7/9/11/12 (CFO's) |
| Computer Specialist | GS-334 | | 5/7/9/11/12 | |
| Crop Insurance Underwriter | GS-1162 | | | 5/7/9/11/12 (RSO's) |
| Insurance Management Specialist | GS-1101 | 5/7/9/11/12 | 5/7/9/11/12/13 | 5/7/9/11/12 (RSO's) |
| Management Analyst | GS-343 | 5/7/9/11/12 | | |
| Office Automation Clerk or Assistant | GS-326 | 4/5 | 4/5 | 4/5 (CFO's; RSO's) |
| Paralegal Specialist | GS-950 | 5/7/9/11/12 | | |
| Program Analyst | GS-343 | 5/7/9/11/12 | 5/7/9/11/12 | |
| Administrative or Program Assistant | GS-303 | | | 5/6/7/8 (CFO's) |
| Public Affairs Specialist | GS-1035 | 5/7/9/11/12 | | |
| Regulatory Specialist | GS-1101 | 5/7/9/11/12 | | |
| Secretary | GS-318 | Division 4/5/6 | Division 4/5/6/7 Branch 4/5/6 | Director 4/5/6 Branch 4/5 (RSO's) |
| Staff Assistant | GS-301 | | | 5/7/9/11 (RSO's) |
| Statistical Assistant | GS-1531 | | 5/6/7 | |
| Statistician, Agricultural | GS-1530 | | 5/7/9/11/12 | |
| Survey Statistician | GS-1530 | | 5/7/9/11/12 | 5/7/9/11/12 (RSO's) |
| Systems Accountant | GS-510 | | 5/7/9/11/12 | |

Career Ladder Patterns for FAS

| Title | Series | National Office | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|------------------------|-----|
| Agricultural Marketing Specialist | GS-1146 | 5/7/9/11/12 | |
| Compliance Review Specialist | GS-1801 | 9/11/12 | |
| Economist | GS-110 | 7/9/11/12 | |
| EEO Specialist | GS-260 | 9/11/12 | |
| Import Control Specialist | GS-1101 | 11/12 | |
| Public Affairs Specialist | GS-1035 | 9/11/12 | |
| Secretary | GS-318 | Branch | 5/6 |
| | | Division | 6/7 |
| Traffic Management Specialist | GS-2130 | 11/12 | |